

P 080949Z SEP 95
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8705
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY CAIRO

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 003413

PARIS FOR ALLEGRONE; LONDON FOR TUELLER

E.O. 12356: DECL:9/8/05

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SUBJECT: QADHAFI THREAT TO EXPEL PALESTINIANS
STOKES LEBANESE PARANOIA RE "IMPLANTATION"

¶1. (U) LIBYAN LEADER QADHAFI'S THREAT TO EXPEL A REPORTED 50,000 PALESTINIAN WORKERS FROM LIBYA HAS PRODUCED LOCAL REPORTS THAT THESE PEOPLE ARE OR WILL BE COMING TO LEBANON. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, FATAH DISSIDENT MUNIR AL-MUQDAH HAS CLAIMED THAT 2,000 SUCH REFUGEES ALREADY HAVE RETURNED, MOSTLY TO CAMPS IN THE SOUTH. AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE, WHOSE LOCAL OFFICE IS OFTEN SENSATIONAL AND UNRELIABLE, PUTS THE NUMBER AT ONLY 400.

¶2. (U) WHATEVER THE TRUE NUMBERS OF PALESTINIANS WHO MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE TRICKLED BACK FROM LIBYA IN RECENT WEEKS, THE GOL IS SENDING SIGNALS THAT IT WILL NOT BE, IN THE TERM USED IN LOCAL NEWSPAPERS, THE "DUMPING GROUND" FOR PALESTINIANS EXPELLED FROM OTHER REGIONAL STATES. THUS THE GOL HAS REPORTEDLY ISSUED ORDERS TO PORT AUTHORITIES TO DENY ENTRY TO SHIPS CARRYING PALESTINIANS FROM LIBYA. ACCORDING TO VAGUE RUMORS--A STAPLE OF THE LOCAL POLITICAL DIET--FOUR SHIPS CARRYING PALESTINIANS HAVE DEPARTED TRIPOLI HEADED TOWARD LEBANON. OTHER REPORTS SAY THAT FM BUWAYZ TOOK A TOUGH LINE ON THE ISSUE WITH VISITING PLO POLITICAL DIRECTOR FAROUQ QADDOUMI IN THEIR SEPTEMBER 5 MEETING.

¶3. (C) COMMENT: THE GOL IS SEEKING TO SEND OUT SIGNALS OF "TOUGHNESS" ON THESE REPORTS, BUT IT IS UNCLEAR TO US HOW IT COULD OR WOULD STOP THE RETURN OF POSSIBLE MIGRANTS WHO HOLD VALID LEBANESE TRAVEL DOCUMENTS. FOR PALESTINIANS WITHOUT SUCH DOCUMENTS, HOWEVER, WE ARE SURE THAT--UNLESS SYRIA ORDERED OTHERWISE--THE GOL WOULD DENY ENTRY (AS WITH THE HAMAS ACTIVISTS EXPELLED BY ISRAEL IN 1992, WHO WERE ISOLATED TO A MAKESHIFT CAMP AT MARJ AL-ZAHOUR IN THE SOUTH).

¶4. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: AS PREVIOUS REPORTING HAS DETAILED, IF THERE IS ONE ISSUE THAT CAN FORGE SOMETHING APPROACHING A NATIONAL CONSENSUS IN FRACTIOUS LEBANON, IT IS A NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD RESETTLEMENT OF PALESTINIANS ON LOCAL SOIL. THE ISSUE, WITH ITS THREAT OF DISTURBING THE TENUOUS SECTARIAN BALANCE AS IT HELPED DO IN 1975, EVOKES DEEP FEAR AND STRONG EMOTION. ESPECIALLY IN A POLITICAL SEASON WHEN PRESIDENT HRAWI AVIDLY IS CURRYING MARONITE FAVOR AND SHI'A SPEAKER BIRRI IS TRYING TO ASSERT HIS POWER AGAINST SUNNI PM HARIRI AND HIS HIZBALLAH RIVALS, WE CAN EXPECT A HARD GOL LINE ON ANY PALESTINIAN SETTLEMENT ISSUE THAT MIGHT ARISE. END COMMENT.

¶5. (C) EMBASSY IS DISCREETLY FOLLOWING UP WITH LOCAL UNRWA CONTACTS TO SEE IF WE CAN SEPARATE

FACT FROM FEARFUL FANTASY.

SCHLICHER